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THE EDITOR

SOME time ago the Boston *Evening Transcript* published a letter of nearly half a column, headed "A Hint to Trained Nurses," in which the writer says:

"When will the trained nurse learn the professional reticence and discreet abstinence from the use of names in general conversation that are law and gospel to lawyer, priest, and doctor, and that should be equally binding on even the handmaid of the faculty? There are admittedly numbers of the sisterhood whose own good taste and good sense operate as a barrier to the indiscriminate retailing of gossip and private matters, gleaned while on duty by the bedside of the sick, but, unfortunately, these would appear to be the exceptions where they should be the rule."

Then the story is told at some length of a nurse who, after having made herself exceedingly popular while caring for a patient during the summer months at a country-house, was afterwards invited by a neighboring cottager to return for a social visit. "Of course," the writer says, "the nurse was expected to talk of her vacation and tell interesting anecdotes about her cases, which would have been all right had she withheld names." Needless to say, in this case the names slipped out, and the family parted from her, having been charmed and entertained by their visitor, but resolving never to employ her in a professional capacity. The article concludes, after touching at some length upon the various professional aspects of the case, not with advice to nurses to refrain entirely from talking about their cases, but with the suggestion that they should adopt a universal impersonal patient, whose identity it would be impossible to recognize.

We offer no apology for this foolish young person whose indiscretion has subjected the profession to such humiliating criticism through the columns of a daily newspaper. Still, we have for her a lurking sympathy, for in the one remark of the writer, that "of course, the nurse was expected to talk of her vocation," we recognize a most difficult situation. Have we not all had the equally trying experience of falling into the hands of morbidly curious people, who persistently questioned and cross-questioned in regard to everything pertaining to the most confidential aspect of a nurse's work until we have found ourselves driven

to one of two extremes, either to be exceedingly rude or to gratify the curiosity of the questioner for the sake of peace?

If one is to judge by the conversations one hears in street-cars, in railroad trains, in stores, on street-corners, and wherever women stop for a moment to greet a friend, we may rightly infer that there is no subject so popular among the masses of women at the present time as diseases. When we consider the thousands of nurses who are distributed throughout the country, carrying with them a knowledge the revelation of which would mean, in too many instances, the marring of domestic happiness, if not the wrecking of homes, is it right that the profession at large should be condemned by the indiscretion of a few?

Following the idea of this writer, why should we not learn a lesson from poor, abused old "Sairy Gamp" in adopting a universal "Mrs. Harris," inventing anecdotes and imaginary bits of gossip about her for the edification of people who expect us to talk about our profession?

MISS DRAPEER's paper in the current issue, on the "Value of General Reading for Private Duty Nurses," offers a very valuable suggestion in this connection. A nurse who can do a little fancy-work, who reads the daily paper, who can glance over one or two of the popular magazines, who manages to read two or three of the leading books of the year, who hears an occasional "star" performance at a good theatre, who attends church occasionally, and who keeps her eyes and ears open as she goes about the world, need not depend upon her profession as a means of entertaining her patients or her friends. Her life, with its limitations, is broader and more varied than that of the average domestic woman. What we need is a more general mingling with other women in other branches of work. We predict a broadening of our interests in such work as is being done by the "Garfield" Alumnae, and in the affiliation of our local and national societies with other organized bodies of workers.

THE report of the Committee on the Study Course, given in the Educational Department, includes a most interesting and varied line of subjects, but in referring to the study of parliamentary law, the committee has proven the force of our statement in the last month's number, that most societies give up the study of parliamentary law when they have become somewhat familiar with the ordinary conduct of a meeting.

We are still of the opinion, with all deference to this committee, that there is room in our local and national organizations for a more careful study of the duties of committees.

We need to be enlightened upon such points as the obligations of

the chairman to the elective body; the power, and the limitations of power, of a chairman to act independently of the members of her committee; the loyalty of the individual member, not only to the chairman, but to the committee as a whole, and the rights of the minority.

Mistakes of this nature are not peculiar to nursing organizations, but have held many women's clubs up to ridicule, and our societies are now too well established to plead the excuse of inexperience.

WE print in this number the address of Dean Russell, given at the last meeting of the Superintendents' Society, held in New York in the spring, which contains a most comprehensive description of the aims of the "Teachers' College," in connection with which the course in "Hospital Economics" has been established. This address embodies a volume of interesting matter in condensed form. We are impressed with the similarity between the methods used in the training of nurses and what Dean Russell describes as the "apprentice system," which is necessary for accurate work in any of the trades, arts, or professions. All must learn accuracy, precision, and despatch before skill is obtained or work is performed with ease, time, material, and a trained teacher being necessary to all.

The course of "Hospital Economics" has for its motive the training of a limited number of women who, through their superior knowledge, shall become our teachers and leaders in progressive work. These students must possess, as Dean Russell has said, the teaching gift and what we call natural leadership before the advantages of such a course can be of the greatest benefit, so that even after the completion of this term of instruction there must come practical experience, to prove the value of the individual woman.

THE very cordial manner in which the advent of THE AMERICAN JOURNAL OF NURSING has been welcomed by the *Nursing Record*, of London, has been one of the exceedingly pleasant experiences of our initiatory work. The aims of these two journals are identical, and we most emphatically endorse the suggestion of the *Record*, that progress to the profession on both sides of the Atlantic must come through the co-operation of these two magazines. We are watching with intense interest the splendid fight the *Record* is making for better conditions of army nursing, with a properly trained woman at the head, and join hands with the British nurses in this issue.

The favorable comments by the general and professional press at home have also been very gratifying, and the scores of personal letters to the editor from friends and strangers have come as an inspiration to greater effort.

To no one more than to a nurse does it come to know the happiness of the Christmas season.

Both in the hospital and in the home it is her privilege to be the sharer of other people's joys, as well as of their sorrows.

She knows that the custom of celebrating Christmas is not confined to the rich, but is almost universal among every class of people in countries where the teachings of Christ are known.

The little story given in this number is founded upon facts, and the frontispiece is a photograph of the "Children's Ward of the New York Hospital."

It is really easier to arrange a Christmas-tree in a hospital than in a private house, a special fund for this purpose being unnecessary, as either the "milkman" or the "grocer" will provide a tree, and an appeal through the newspapers will always bring quantities of toys, both new and old, with trimmings for the tree and Christmas greens for the decoration of the wards.

It is astonishing to find how many people will respond to an appeal of this kind who are not interested in the routine work of the hospital. The lighting of a tree can be easily arranged where the building is lighted by electricity; a dozen of the ordinary bulbs stained in a variety of colors with aniline dyes and allowed to dry thoroughly, a few yards of cord, a couple of hours' work from the engineer, and the effect is magical, and all danger of fire done away with, and if the decorations of the tree are not removed, it can be lighted for a few minutes every evening for a week, thus prolonging greatly the pleasure to the children.

THE many friends of Miss M. Eugenie Hibbard will be sorry to hear of her illness with yellow fever at Matanzas, Cuba.

Under date of November 9 Miss Hibbard sends a message of regret that she has been unable to continue her series of articles entitled "On the Maine to South Africa," commenced in the October number, and hopes to be able to complete them during the early months of the new year.

